1: Roth--15-16 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 481, 283, 516

"Climbing Trees. --We have some good accounts of the manner in which the natives used to climb trees. Mr. Thirkell (Papers, etc. Roy. Soc. Tas. Aug. 1873) thus describes how this was accomplished. 'The mode of climbing trees was to get a grass band [16] twisted, put it round the tree, and hold the two ends in one hand, and then with a sharp flint stone they would chip the bark downwards and make a notch for the big toe, then change hands and do the same on the other side.'"

116, 481, 283, 516

"Backhouse's description is more detailed. 'The climbing of the lofty, smooth-trunked gum trees, by the women, to obtain opossums, which lodge in the hollows of decayed branches, is one of the most remarkable feats I ever witnessed. This is effected without making any holes for the thumbs or great toes, as is common among the natives of New South Wales, except where the bark is rough and loose, at the base of the tree. In this a few notches are cut by means of a sharp flint or hatchet; the latter being preferred. A rope, twice as long as is necessary to encompass the tree, is then thrown around it. In former times this was made of tough grass, or strips of kangaroo-skin, but one of hemp is more generally used. The left hand is firmly twisted into one end of the rope, the middle of which is tightly grasped by the right, the hatchet is placed on the bare, closely-cropped head, and the feet are placed against the tree: a step or two is then advanced, and the body, at the same time, is brought into a posture so nearly exact as to admit the rope, by a compound motion, to be slackened, and at the same moment hitched a little further up the tree. By this means a woman will ascend a lofty tree, with a smooth thunk, almost as quickly as a man would go up a ladder. Should a piece of loose bark impede the ascent of the rope, the portion of rope held in the right hand is taken between the teeth, or swung behind the right leg and caught between the great and the fore toe and fixed against the tree. One hand is thus freed, to take the hatchet from the head, and with it to dislodge the loose bark. On arriving at a large limb, the middle of the rope is also secured in the left hand, and the loose end is thrown over the limb by the

right hand, by which also the end is caught, and the middle grasped, till the left hand is cleared. This is then wrapped into the middle of the rope, and the feet are brought up to the wrinkles of the bark, which exist below the large limbs. One end of the rope is then pulled downward, and this causes the other to ascend, so that, by an effort of the feet, the body is turned on the upper side of the limb of the tree. In descending, the woman places one arm on each side of the limb of the tree, and swings the rope with one hand till she catches it with the other; she then turns off the limb, and swings underneath it, till she succeeds in steadying herself with her feet against the trunk, around which she then throws the loose end [17] of the rope. Having secured this, she lets go the portion by which she was suspended under the limb, and descends in the manner in which she ascended. Although this is done with ease by women in vigour, one who had been out of health, but seemed recovered, could not get many steps off the ground, so that not only skill, but a considerable measure of strength, appears necessary to ascend the gigantic gum-trees.' Widowson's account (p. 190), on the other hand, describes a method of climbing trees which is accomplished without the use of the rope: 'They are extremely expert in climbing, and can reach the top of the largest forest trees, without the aid of branches: they effect this by means of a small sharp flint, which they clasp tightly in the ball of their four fingers, and, having cut a notch out of the bark, they

easily ascend, with the large toe of each foot in one notch, and their curiously manufactured hatchet in the other.' (1)"

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"1. It has been said that the notches cut in the trees were about 3½ feet apart."

1: Roth--154 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 283

"The natives made use of a grass rope, which was passed round their body and the tree [for climbing]. To make such a rope some eight or ten men would all begin in a most expert way to pull the long wiry grass; and when they had sufficient would all run together, and mix it; then half of them would get small crooked sticks and twist the grass, whilst the others let it out into small fine ropes. Then all these ropes were twisted together into one strong one....One custom of the aborigines was to plait strings from the bark of a yellow-coloured shrub, equal to flax, both in strength and fineness, and found in abundance' (James Scott, Papers, etc., Roy. Soc. Tasm. July, 1873)."

1: Roth--154 [2] (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 283, 177

"In describing the natives' method of catching the opossum, Lloyd mentions, that they used 'a strong wire-grass rope, made into close three-strand plait' (p. 46). Backhouse also speaks of this rope, and says one of kangaroo skin was used previous to the use of European hemp' (p. 172). It will be remembered that the rafts described by Péron, La Billardière (II. ch. xi. p. 80), and Backhouse (p. 58), were fixed up with grass cord. 'They always carried with them a small rope, made of kangaroo sinews' (Davis, p. 413). Some 'had a slender cord bound several times round the head. I afterwards learned that most of these cords were fabricated from the bark of a shrub of the spurge family, very common in this country' (La Billardière, II. ch. x. p. 35). According to Laplace the skins they use are sewn together with threads of bark (III. ch. xviii. p. 201); and according to Rossel, parts of the huts were also bound together by threads of bark (I. ch. iii. p. 53)."